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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000753

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS
LONDON FOR POL - GURNEY

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: CHINESE AMBASSADOR PRESSURES GON TO ARREST
TIBETANS

REF: KATHMANDU 715

Classified By: Ambassador Michael E. Malinowski, for reasons 1.5 (b,d)

1. (C) At an April 25 meeting with Home Secretary Tikka Datta Niraula, Ambassador Malinowski raised the issue of twenty-one Tibetans, including eleven minors, recently arrested on immigration charges (reftel). The Ambassador encouraged the Government of Nepal (GON) to release the detainees into UNHCR custody, in accordance with prior practice and the unwritten "gentleman's agreement" that has governed GON treatment of transiting Tibetan refugees since 1990. In response, Niraula stated that the Chinese Ambassador personally had made a high-level presentation to complain about the group, and had accused members of the group of being involved in unspecified criminal activities.

2. (U) UNHCR has confirmed that two of the youngest children (ages six and nine) have been released from jail without fine, and that a second six-year-old will be released today. Eight minors remain in jail. (Note: Reftel reported that the children being released were not accompanied by parents. New information from UNHCR indicates that the father of the second six-year old boy is in custody. End note.) The Department of Immigration has offered no explanation to UNHCR for the detention of the refugees.

3. (C) Comment: Information from the Home Secretary confirms Post's suspicion that the Chinese Embassy has been behind the recent crackdown on Tibetan refugees by the GON. It is not clear if the Chinese pressure is the result of directives from Beijing, or is a local initiative. Post will continue to encourage the GON to work in cooperation with UNHCR and to release the refugees from detention.
MALINOWSKI